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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 130  
By Chumney

A RESOLUTION to urge Memphis City officials, the Memphis Police Department and the special Anti-Gang Task Force to make safe schools a top priority and to address escalating school gang and other violence.

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the elected representatives of this General Assembly to bring immediate attention to the ever increasing problem of safety in our schools, and its effect on this State's most precious natural resource: our children; and

WHEREAS, crime in Tennessee schools has risen dramatically in recent years, and if the issue is not addressed, will affect the lives of our students for many years to come; and

WHEREAS, despite the efforts by local and school officials to control the security problems in Memphis City schools, 105 assaults were reported in the first semester for school year 1996-97; and

WHEREAS, this blatant disregard for the law is evidenced by the number of dangerous weapons being carried into schools: 54 incidents involving knives, 29 reports of confiscated firearms and 22 "other" types of weapons found on school property; and

WHEREAS, another 127 incidents of disorderly conduct were reported in Memphis City Schools during the same period; and

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WHEREAS, there were 63 incidents of marijuana being confiscated or used, 4 incidents of “other” illicit drugs being found, and 1 case involving the confiscation of drug paraphernalia; and

WHEREAS, sexual deviates are also included in the 1996-97 incident report with 4 cases of exhibitions themselves either on or near a school campus; an alarming 117 incidents of fighting were also reported; and

WHEREAS, most crimes, including illegal gang activity, occur as children and school personnel are entering and leaving schools, with some children literally running home from school in order to avoid gang members who congregate on or near school property after school adjourns; and

WHEREAS, reports of strangers and non-students entering onto unsecured campuses before and after school in Memphis cannot be tolerated; and

WHEREAS, most, if not all, of these instances traumatize the students and interfere with their ability to concentrate and feel safe and secure at school; and

WHEREAS, police department response time to calls, in some precincts, is delayed due to shift changes that coincide with the start and end of the school day; and

WHEREAS, it is important that the members of this legislative body strive to ensure safety in Tennessee schools; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we urge the Mayor of Memphis, the Honorable W.W. Herenton, and Police Chief Walter Winfrey to make our schools a safe haven for students in which they can learn in a secure environment by identifying specific police officers who will be available at or near each school at the beginning and end of the school day, and taking such other measures as are appropriate to ensure the safe passage of children to and from school.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we also urge the Memphis City School officials and the recently created special Anti-Gang Task Force to address the safety and concerns of Memphis children, parents and school personnel by devising ways to better secure school property so as to avoid strangers and unauthorized non-students from entering such property by providing adequate police manpower at the schools each day during the times when illegal gang activity most frequently occurs, and by requiring safe schools to be the top priority for the police department.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.